



Examples of Primary Interpretive Themes

1. Blue Ridge Parkway: A scenic road

The following primary interpretive themes were developed for the Blue Ridge Parkway, a scenic road that winds along the Appalachian Mountains in the United States:

1. *The Blue Ridge region is among the biologically richest areas in North America.*
2. *Material cultures and ways of life in the Blue Ridge province illustrate how isolation and assimilation shape cultures.*
3. *The parkway is a special roadway and a managed landscape that was designed to maximize scenic values.*

2. John Day Fossil Beds: An unusual geological site

A different approach to developing primary interpretive themes was taken at John Day Fossil Beds National Monument, in which several observations lead to one main theme:

At John Day Fossil Beds National Monument,

- *there are lots of fossils*
- *there is a great diversity of fossils*
- *the fossils are very well preserved*
- *the fossils represent an unusually long time span*
- *the fossils are datable*

Thus, it is wonderful place to study evolutionary change.

3. Isle Royale: An isolated island

At Isle Royale National Park (on Isle Royale, Lake Superior) the park staff identified “park themes” instead of primary interpretive themes. These themes incorporate key resources and stories that characterize the park. Some examples of these park themes include:

- *Self-sufficiency is a way of life on Isle Royale. Self-sufficiency is as important today for park backpackers, canoeists, and boaters as it was for those who first used and settled the island — Native Americans, European miners, lighthouse keepers, and commercial fishermen.*
- *Isle Royale is a living laboratory where plant and animal life can be studied in a relatively simple and controlled ecosystem. The theory of island biogeography is illustrated by both the limited number and variety of species found here.*
- *Because of Isle Royale’s generally undisturbed setting, it is an important source of information about the world around us — how the world evolved, how the impacts of civilization have altered natural systems, and what the unmodified environment holds.*
- *The Park Service is striving to sustain the native fishery of Isle Royale National Park — perhaps the most exceptional fishery in the Great Lakes region. For centuries Isle Royale’s waters have attracted fishermen — prehistoric people, immigrant commercial fishermen, and today’s sport fishermen. A relic of the past, adaptive fishing lifestyle and technology still remains and reminds us of this significant island culture.*